

(Washington, D.C.) – U.S. Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) today opposed H.R. 1230, a bill that would make offshore oil drilling more dangerous by bypassing layers of safety and environmental reviews. The legislation would rely on shoddy, pre-BP-spill environmental studies to accelerate drilling lease sales already scheduled by the Obama administration.

“Today’s vote was an act of willful amnesia, one that deliberately ignored the frightening and important lessons of the Deepwater Horizon disaster,” Holt said. “In light of last summer’s catastrophe, Congress should be demanding greater scrutiny of offshore drilling permits, rather than turning a blind eye to the regulatory flaws that allowed the spill in the first place.”

The legislation would require the Secretary of the Interior to hold numerous lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico in the next four to eight months and require a lease sale off the coast of Virginia this year. For these sales, the bill would require the Interior Department to accept environmental reviews completed prior to the Deepwater Horizon disaster, many of which relied on the same demonstrably flawed and dangerous assumptions and inadequate reviews as the BP lease.

If the rushed review process led to another oil spill along the lines of Deepwater Horizon, the impact on New Jersey could be dire. A recent report by the Environment America Research and Policy Center estimated that a spill off of the U.S. east coast could endanger over 200,000 New Jersey jobs and \$12 billion in income to New Jersey’s fishing and tourism industries.

In an effort to mitigate the bill’s most dangerous provisions, Holt introduced an amendment that would have required new environmental reviews for permits issued prior to the Deepwater Horizon spill. The amendment was rejected on a 174-240 vote.

Holt added, “Families sorely need relief from runaway gas prices, but let’s be clear: no independent analyst believes that this bill will cut gas prices by even a penny. This bill is not about protecting consumers. It’s about protecting property giveaways to the same oil companies that raked in \$32 billion in profits in just the last three months.”

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